

EISENHOWER ADMITS U-2 FUMBLING, SAYS BOOK

N.Y. Herald Tribune News Service

NEW YORK — Former President Eisenhower has admitted that his administration blundered in its handling of the U-2 crisis.

According to a new book, "The U-2 Affair," Eisenhower "admitted privately that the United States had jumped too soon in issuing its May 8 statement." The statement, issued four days after Francis Gary Power's plane had been brought down by the Russians, said the pilot experienced oxygen trouble while on a weather mission over Turkey.

Eisenhower also made this admission in a CBS television interview, filmed for use last November. "But this portion of the film was snipped out at the insistence of Lt. Col. John Eisenhower, the President's son, who is serving as his father's aide," the authors said.

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"The U-2 Affair" is by two Washington correspondents, David Wise of the New York Herald Tribune, and Thomas B. Ross of the Chicago Sun-Times. It is being serialized in Look magazine.

Eisenhower conceded privately that the Administration had become over-confident in the U-2 operation, the authors said, adding:

"There was reason for this over-confidence. The U-3 program had operated without exposure for four years, providing the underpinning for some of the most important policies of the Eisenhower years. It had convinced the President that the celebrated 'border gap' and 'missile gap' were 'fiction.' It had also persuaded him that Soviet advances in space were as spectacular as they were, and that the Russians, too, were experiencing their share of the U-2 crisis."

The authors said that U-2 operations had been suspended once or twice because of political considerations, but only in "an informal way," and not by specific order of the President or Secretary of State Christian Herter.

In this way, the authors said, the U-2 was absent from Soviet skies during the visit to Russia by Gen. Nathan F. Twining in 1956 and during Soviet Premier Khrushchev's visit to the United States in 1959.

But as the time approached for the summit conference of May 15, 1960, the flights were not called off. This was a deliberate decision by American intelligence officers. They believed the summit might result in a degree of harmony that would cancel the flights forever, and they wanted "to get one last mission under the wire," the book stated.